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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

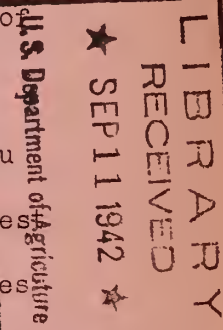
MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 1942

SUBJECT: "PRESERVING FOOD BY DRYING. "Information from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Have you put up any fruits and vegetables by drying this year? You can still do it. Many of the late summer and fall crops are the very best for drying. Apples, apricots, figs, peaches, and pears are old favorites for home drying. Other fruits that dry well are nectarines, plums, and prunes. (No use mentioning berries and cherries this late in the season except as a reminder for next year.) Sweet corn and mature beans are the best "driers" among the vegetables. Okra dries well, too, for your winter soups and stews. And recently scientists have learned how to dry a number of other vegetables successfully.

Drying is both the oldest and the newest way to preserve food. Many ancient peoples dried food to keep it. The American Indians were drying corn, beans, pumpkins, berries and game long before Columbus. Today drying--or dehydrating--has come back as a most important way of preserving food. The war is responsible for the comeback--wartime shortage of shipping space, and war-time shortage of canning equipment. Dehydrating--or taking the water out of food--saves a great deal of shipping space. Dehydrated foods on the average take only a fourth as much space as fresh foods, and weigh only a fourth or fifth as much. You can get 9 times as much food value from a container of dehydrated food as from the same container of fresh food. Shipping dehydrated food instead of fresh food to our allies can save in a year as much as a thousand cargo ships of 5 thousand tons each for other vital materials of war. You can see why, all of a sudden, the housewives of Britain and the other United Nations, as well as the





cooks of our armed forces, are learning to use powdered eggs and milk, dehydrated meat, fruit, and vegetables.

But you may be wondering how home drying comes into the war picture. Well, drying is one good way of putting up food when canning supplies--metal, rubber, sugar and so on--~~are~~ scarce. Whether you do any drying this year or not, you will want to know how to do it successfully--the latest methods, according to the scientists who are working on the subject. Nobody knows right now how short canning supplies may be next year. But a good way to "get set" for the future is to learn now all you can about home drying. At least you can study up on it in the new bulletin just published by the Department of Agriculture. To get a copy of this bulletin write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for "Drying Foods for Victory Meals", No. 1918. This bulletin is free while the free supply lasts. If possible try drying some fruits or vegetables this fall. Now is a good time to practice and get experience.

Drying is not a difficult job. It doesn't take a lot of expensive equipment. A drier to hang over the stove is easy to make at home. Or you can make a cabinet drier to use over an oil stove. The bulletin gives full directions for building these driers for home use. The secret is to have the right heat, a dry atmosphere and a circulation of air all around the food so it will dry evenly.

Drying does take time--and constant attention--especially at the beginning and end of the process. The time necessary for proper drying depends on the kind of food, the size of the pieces, the type of drier and the weather. Fruits in a home drier take anywhere from 6 to 24 hours. And vegetables take from 3 to 15 hours. Sun-drying takes much longer than drying indoors where you can control the heat.

Whether you dry by the sun or by controlled heat, use all the speed you can. Use speed in preparing the fresh food and getting it into the drier. The faster





the work goes, from garden to drier, the more vitamin value you will keep in the foods, and the better their flavor and cooking quality will be.

When you are considering what to dry, remember that fruits are easier to dry than most vegetables. Vegetables must have a precook in steam or boiling water before drying. Fruits don't need this steam or hot-water treatment. But many fruits do need sulfuring or some other treatment to hold their color and keep them from turning dark. When you are considering what to dry, remember, too, that though you can dry many different foods, some of these may better be preserved in another way. You can dry beets, sweetpotatoes, pumpkin and squash. But if you have a place to store these vegetables safely, why take the trouble and time to dry them? You can dry green leafy vegetables, such as beet tops, turnip greens, kale, mustard, and dandelion greens. But if you live in a climate mild enough to have a winter garden, you will be wise to have your greens fresh from the garden instead of dried.

Successful drying depends on 3 things: dry air, warm temperature of the air, and movement of air. In parts of the country where the weather is warm, sunny and dry for long stretches, sun-drying is successful. But drying indoors is generally more successful because indoors you can control the heat and the circulation of air--drying can go on continuously even after sundown, and in rainy as well as in sunny weather.

This is just a start on information about drying food at home. You can get complete information and directions in the new bulletin. And once more, the bulletin is called "Drying Foods for Victory Meals." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1918. And you can get a copy by sending a postcard to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

